

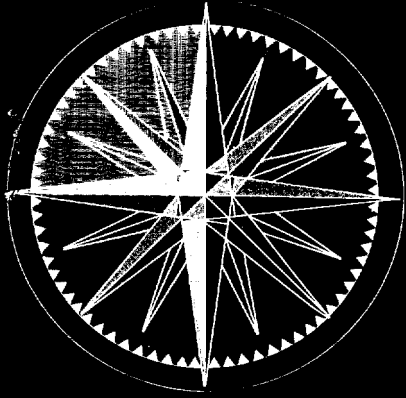
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SPECIAL REPORT

NIGERIA'S NATIONAL ELECTION

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

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18 December 1964

NIGERIA'S NATIONAL ELECTION

Federal parliamentary elections to be held in Nigeria on 30 December will mark the beginning of a critical period for Africa's most populous country. At stake in the balloting, and even more in the political maneuvering certain to follow, is the relatively broad-based governing coalition of major regional forces which has been the foundation of Nigeria's stability since it gained independence in 1960.

That coalition, which has combined the conservative Muslim leaders of the politically dominant north with the largest and most dynamic party of the more progressive south, is threatened by a recent realignment of political forces. For the election, the two coalition partners are arrayed against each other as leaders of rival national alliances which both reflect and further aggravate the federation's basic north-south cleavage.

Should the realignment hold up after the election--as the leader of the favored northern-based alliance insists it will--Nigeria's new government will be appreciably more narrowly based than its predecessor. Such a development would greatly impair its capacity to cope with new strains and tensions looming on the economic front as well as the inevitable periodic crises which arise from Nigeria's tremendous regional and tribal diversity.

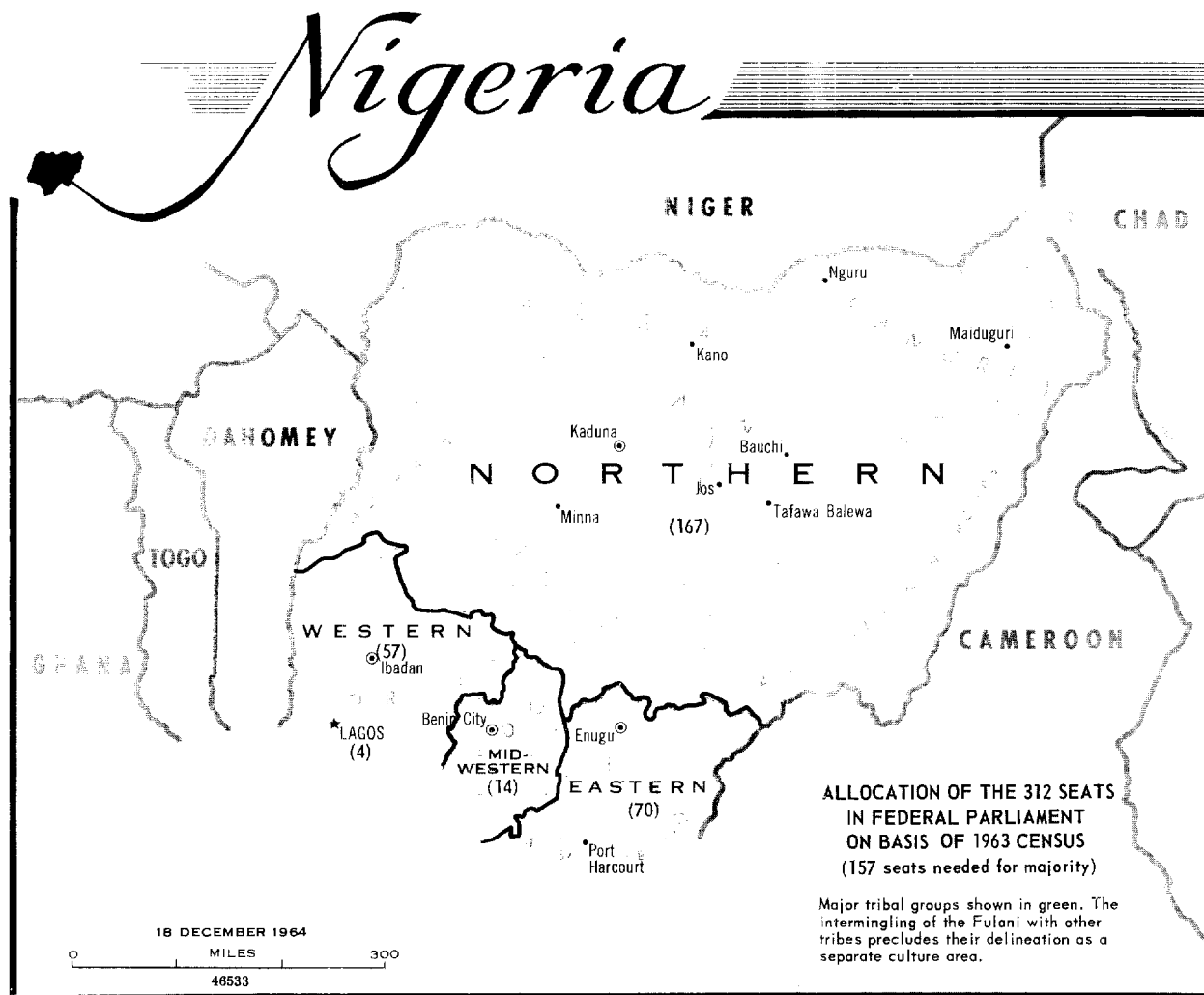
The Structure of Politics

Nigerian politics are still overwhelmingly regional, and each major political disagreement threatens to develop into a crisis which could split the country back into the basic tribal components from which the British colonial administrators put it together some fifty years ago. Even the government's census figures are the subject of bitter controversy, since they are used as the basis for assignment

of parliamentary seats and thereby weight the political balance toward one tribal group or another.

Thus the country's major political parties essentially express the fears and ambitions of and concern themselves almost exclusively with the interests of Nigeria's three largest tribal groupings--the Fulani-Hausa, the Ibo, and the Yoruba. The situation is further complicated by the fact

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that the Fulani-Hausa are Muslim, with a relatively rigid, strongly traditionalist social structure. The Ibo and Yoruba, despite considerable differences, have in common a relatively early contact with European education and commerce. The Fulani-Hausa dominate northern Nigeria, the Ibo the eastern part of the south, and the Yoruba the western section of the south. These areas became the three original regions of Nigeria,

and a fourth, the midwestern, was carved out of the Western Region in 1963 mainly because its creation served the political ends of the Northern and Eastern regions. Each of the four regions is allotted a specific number of seats in the federal Parliament on the basis of its population; Lagos, the federal capital, elects four additional representatives (see map).

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The Muslim north has been and remains the most populous section of the country; this situation was confirmed by the census of 1963, the results of which have been grudgingly accepted after an intense legal and political struggle. The Fulani-Hausa party, the Northern People's Congress (NPC), has thus been the largest in Parliament, and the Northern Region alone has more than half the seats. The next most important party is the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), which represents the Ibo, although it originated as an attempt to form a national Nigerian party and its leaders still espouse the ideal of a nationwide political organization. The NCNC has much more the flavor of a "progressive" African nationalist party than does the NPC, which is controlled by Muslim aristocrats who have operated more or less openly through the traditional devices of social and, if necessary, physical compulsion.

For the past five years, the NPC and the NCNC have maintained an uneasy alliance to divide the positions in the federal government between them and to govern the country. Nnamdi Azikiwe, a founder of the NCNC, has been president, a largely ceremonial position but one with significant psychological influence, while Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa--representing NPC "boss" Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna (traditional ruler) of Sokoto and the Northern Region's premier--has been

Nigeria's prime minister. This arrangement has frozen out the third major party, the Action Group (AG) of the Yoruba tribe. The effect of this on turbulent Yoruba politicians led to a party split two years ago. A basically traditionalist element, now called the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) broke off; it controls the Western Region government. The parent AG now is almost exclusively modernist and vehemently anti-North.

Only three minor parties have any electoral significance. The Northern Elements Progressive Union is composed of Muslims who advocate reform and democratization of Northern political institutions; it has long been allied with the NCNC. The United Middle Belt Congress, another Northern group, represents an enclave of about a million non-Muslims called the Tiv and is allied with the AG. In the Midwestern Region, a Midwest Democratic Front, under the control of the NPC, opposes the NCNC's administration there. Communists and pro-Communists are largely attached to two minute southern nuclei, the Socialist Workers and Farmers Party of Nigeria and the Nigerian Labor Party. The former is reported to have received funds from the USSR at one time, and plans to contest some seats.

The 1959 general election, held just before independence, gave no party an absolute majority of the 312 seats in the federal legislature. The NPC's

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dominant position, however, has enabled it to attract defectors and it has come to control a sizable majority without its NCNC coalition partner. Nevertheless, the NPC has not tried to dissolve the coalition, and the NCNC has continued to occupy almost half of the cabinet posts, including those of finance and foreign affairs. Practical administrative considerations have played a role in this, since southerners, with their longer exposure to European ways, fill about 90 percent of the Nigerian federal civil service.

Realignment

A realignment among the allies, however, began to take shape early this year. Although the NCNC remained in the government, its national leaders, as well as those of the AG, had become increasingly frustrated over "domination" by the North. Southern progressives had looked to the recent new federal census to break the Northern Region's hold. When the results, which were clearly exaggerated by all regions, showed the North as still having over half the population, the southern progressives were intensely disappointed. Court action upholding the announced results finally ended the crisis, but by that time the government coalition partners had become so estranged that they were negotiating in earnest for new allies.

Last June, the Ibo NCNC and Yoruba AG announced the

formation of the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA), including their respective satellite parties. In August, the Northern leaders countered by forming the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA). This combines the NPC with the NNDP in the West, with the Midwest Democratic Front, and with several very small anti-NCNC parties in the Eastern Region. A month later, Prime Minister Balewa somewhat irregularly added two NNDP politicians to the federal cabinet.

The NNA appears to be a reasonably happy marriage of traditionalist elements, whereas considerable friction exists between working-level elements of the UPGA. The antagonism between Ibo and Yoruba is exceeded only by their distaste for the Fulani-Hausa of the North. Initially, the leaders of the AG and NCNC agreed that neither party would contest a constituency already held by the other. However, personal rivalries have made application of this agreement difficult in some localities. There has also been haggling over other constituencies, especially those affected by redistricting. The possibility thus still exists that NCNC and AG candidates will oppose each other in some areas.

Manifestoes and Issues

Although the outcome of the census controversy ended southerners' hopes that they would make major gains through the reallocation of parliamentary

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seats, the UPGA is waging an extensive campaign. It has issued a manifesto complete with a "dynamic program for the first hundred days," promises of a "socialist society," and a strong indictment of the present government's "reactionary" foreign and domestic policies. Michael Okpara, UPGA leader and Eastern Region premier, is advocating radical constitutional revisions which would place more power at the center, make the now largely ceremonial Senate equal in power to the lower house, and break up the four regions into 25 states. He has also implied that Nigeria presently inclines too much toward the West.

Not to be outdone, the NNA has also issued a manifesto. Its terms are much less positive, but probably more realistic than the UPGA's. It is somewhat more reserved in its social welfare commitments and generally appeals to the interests of the regions, promising to safeguard their considerable "states rights." In foreign policy the NNA comes out in favor of "non-alignment" but says nothing contrary to Nigeria's present pro-Western policies.

Both alliances have made their real appeal on the bread and butter issues of tribal and regional prejudices. The NNA has endeavored to capitalize on

the anti-Ibo feeling of minority tribes in the east, and to split the UPGA by charging that its NCNC component is really trying to build an "Ibo empire." The UPGA has countered by attacking the antidemocratic, parochially oriented policies of the "feudal North" in an attempt to win support from the minority northern tribes.

Election Outcome

Despite an extended campaign trip in the North by UPGA leaders, it appears as of now that the NPC will probably not lose more than 10 of the 167 northern seats. This would be sufficient to give the NPC a bare majority. UPGA victories in the North will probably come mainly in the dissident Tiv area. Since last July, serious rioting has occurred intermittently among the Tiv, who have long resented NPC domination. The disturbances became so extensive last month that the federal government moved an army battalion into the area.

In the Eastern and Mid-western regions, however, the UPGA will probably garner some 74 of the 84 seats. It should also sweep the four constituencies in Lagos. The big question mark is the Western Region,

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where the modernist Action Group leaders, out of power since the 1962 party split, seem to have kept their hold on the mass of the Yoruba electorate. The NNDP government is resorting freely to intimidation, bribes, and coercion, and is rallying the Yoruba Obas (kings) who retain considerable influence, particularly among the semiliterates in certain rural areas. Five of these traditional rulers hold cabinet posts in the Western Region government. Nevertheless, assuming that the ballot boxes are turned over to the federal authorities reasonably intact --not at all a certainty inasmuch as the NNDP controls the government machinery--US ob-

servers do not expect the NNDP to win more than 5 to 15 of the West's 57 seats.

If these forecasts are reasonably accurate, the Northerners and their allies in the NNA would come away from the balloting with between 172 and 182 of the 312 seats, a not uncomfortable majority.

Postelection Prospects

The ballot count seems certain to be only the beginning, however, even if the NNA wins such a majority. Each group evidently intends to buy over and cajole as many of its victorious opponents as it

COALITIONS CONTESTING NIGERIA'S NATIONAL ELECTIONS
30 DECEMBER 1964

NIGERIAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE (NNA)

PARTY	TRIBAL BASE	LEADER	PRESENT STATUS IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	ELECTION PROSPECTS (157 Seats Needed for Majority in Parliament)
Northern People's Congress (NPC)	Fulani-Hausa	Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto	Senior partner of governing coalition; controls at least 179 of 312 seats in Parliament	Will probably win 157 of Northern Region's 167 seats
Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP)	Yoruba	Samuel Akintola	Holds less than 10% of seats in Parliament	Uncertain, but appears likely to win only a small number of seats--all in the Western Region--in a reasonably honest ballot tabulation
The following small southern groupings have for various local reasons joined NNA: Midwest Democratic Front, Niger Delta Congress, Calabar Emancipation Party, Dynamic Party, and Eastern People's Congress				May win up to 10 of Midwestern and Eastern Regions' seats

UNITED PROGRESSIVE GRAND ALLIANCE (UPGA)

National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC)	Ibo	Michael Okpara	Junior partner of governing coalition; controls about 25% of seats in Parliament	The NCNC and AG will probably win 74 of 84 seats allotted to Eastern and Midwestern Regions and appear likely to win a large majority of Western Region's 57 seats, assuming an honest vote count there; the UPGA will probably win the 4 seats in Lagos
Action Group (AG)	Yoruba	Obafemi Awolowo (imprisoned); acting leader is D.S. Adegbenro	Holds less than 10% of seats in Parliament	
United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC)	Tiv and other minority tribes in the North	Joseph Tarka	Holds less than 3% of seats in Parliament	Will probably win 7 to 9 seats in Northern Region
Nigerian Elements Progressive Union (NEPU)	Fulani-Hausa and minority tribes in the North	Aminu Kano	Holds less than 1% of seats in Parliament	Will probably win one seat in Northern Region

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can. The NCNC reportedly has already set aside a sizable amount of money for this purpose. However, a victorious NNA, with the prospect of government jobs and contracts available, would seem likely to profit most from this game.

The question of whether the present broad north-south governing coalition will carry on will not be decided until the lines are actually drawn in the legislature. On several occasions, Ahmadu Bello has publicly indicated that he intends to form an exclusive NNA government after the election. A communiqué issued by the NNA in September stated flatly that no members of the opposition would participate in the next government. However, federal Prime Minister Balewa, who is deputy NPC leader under Bello, has consistently advocated a "national" government including all major parties. In November, Balewa appeared to be considering retiring from the political scene, but has since affirmed his intention to stay on. Bello may have assured the prime minister that the dominant voices of other regions need not be excluded totally from the next government.

Bello's proposal to exclude the UPGA, or drastically reduce its role in the government would not, as one might expect, push the opposition into tighter unity. Indeed, it could well precipitate a split within the NCNC, because

several of the present NCNC ministers are more devoted to the perquisites of office than to party loyalty. They would probably bolt the party rather than become ex-ministers if that choice is offered. Finance Minister Okotie-Eboh, the top NCNC leader in the Midwestern Region, has been particularly careful not to do or say anything throughout the campaign that would antagonize the Northern leaders. The ultimate danger here is that Okotie-Eboh and most of the other NCNC members who now are in the federal cabinet generally represent the conservative wing of their party, and their defection would greatly increase the influence of more radical elements in the NCNC and in the UPGA as a whole.

Another threat to national unity could come from President Azikiwe, the country's number-one nationalist hero, who resigned from active leadership of the NCNC and from active politics to become the head of state. On 10 December, Azikiwe made a speech which amounted to a partisan attack on the electoral practices of the NNA. Azikiwe's speech will undoubtedly serve to encourage UPGA leaders, who that same day warned that they could not accept the results of any election which is not "free and fair." Azikiwe also has publicly vowed to return to active politics if the NCNC is excluded from the government. Such a move by a man whose presence symbolically associates the south with the federal government would give

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the federal structure a serious psychological jolt.

One major casualty of the situation, regardless of the election outcome, is likely to be External Affairs Minister Wachuku. He managed to obtain renomination from the NCNC, but he will probably not be continued in the new cabinet. He has antagonized important NCNC elements by making outspokenly pro-Western pronouncements and by staying aloof from the north-south struggle, while he has alienated NPC leader Bello, especially by criticizing Bello's freewheeling initiatives to develop closer ties among Islamic nations.

Longer Term Outlook

Although the formation of a more narrowly based government under the Northerners would probably not be followed immediately by radical or extra-legal southern countermoves, it will almost certainly increase southern frustration and could eventually provoke extreme measures to break the North's hold. Disgruntled NCNC and AG members might well be tempted to follow in the footsteps of the popular AG leader Obafemi Awolowo, who, following his party's exclusion from the national government after the 1959 election, assumed a progressively

more radical posture and was finally convicted of plotting the violent overthrow of the government.

These domestic political uncertainties can only serve to aggravate Nigeria's already serious economic problems. In addition to struggling with the country's faltering six-year development plan, the next government will almost certainly have to contend with new initiatives from the labor movement. Since winning a significant strike victory last summer, Nigeria's trade unionists are gradually emerging as an important force and one which the Northerners, including the prime minister, have shown a distinct inability to understand or to deal with.

In foreign affairs, the departure of Wachuku would deprive the West of a strategically placed friend, as almost any replacement is unlikely to be willing to buck emotional African tides to the extent Wachuku has. If his successor is a Northerner, and thus more directly responsive to Bello's "Islamic League" vision, Nigeria may fall even further out of step with the governments of other African states --even the moderate ones--and suffer a further loss of influence despite its size and population. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

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